

Morris County Library Policy Regarding Unattended Children

INTRODUCTION

The Morris County Library is funded as a Division of County Government to provide educational, cultural and recreational materials and services to all people of Morris County. As a public library, Morris County Library is a unique institution that welcomes customers of all ages and persuasions. As such, the Morris County Library is a public place and it cannot be responsible for any consequences of caregivers forfeiting their responsibilities. Children and their safety are of great concern to Morris County Library. We encourage families and youth to use the library, and while doing so, affirm the parents' and/or caregiver's responsibility for their child's safety. The following policy was developed to maintain a safe environment for our children.

DEFINITION

An unattended child is a child of any age who is apparently unaccompanied by a parent or caregiver. Children who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves may not be left alone in the library or on library grounds at any time and must have adequate supervision from a caregiver.

Adults, who cannot care for themselves independently without the constant attention of a caregiver, may not be left alone in the library or on library grounds at any time and must have adequate supervision from a caregiver at all times.

Age Related Policy

The library acknowledges that the maturity of children at different ages varies. These rules are subject to the discretion of library staff who may apply them to children other than the ages stated below, if they deem it necessary.

1. Children through the age of five (5) years must have a parent or responsible caregiver in the immediate vicinity (within sight or conversation distance) unless the children are participating in a drop-off library program.
2. Children ages six to seven (6-7) years must have a parent or responsible caregiver in the same service area unless the children are participating in a drop-off library program.
3. Children ages eight to eleven (8-11) years should have a parent or responsible caregiver in the building unless the children are participating in a drop-off library program.

4. When a child participates in a drop-off program, the parent or caregiver must sign the child in and out of the program and, if they do not remain in the building, leave a phone number where they can be reached for the duration of the program. Children must be picked up promptly at the end of the program.
5. Minors twelve (12) and over may use the library unattended for a period of time appropriate to their age and maturity.
6. All children should carry with them the phone number of a parent or responsible caregiver who is to be contacted in case of emergency.

In the event that this policy is violated, we regret that we may have to notify Morris County Park Police.

January, 2007

Unattended Children Procedures

Children left Unattended during Library Hours

- If a child under the age of 12 is found unattended in the library every effort should be made to locate a parent or caregiver within the building.
- If the child can provide information, library staff will attempt to locate the parent using phone number provided by child, or by checking borrower records or phone books for information.
 - If the parent cannot be located, but the child expects to be picked up within an hour, the child can remain in the library. The parent will be informed of our policy on unattended children upon picking up the child.
 - If the parent fails to retrieve the child, or is not expected within an hour, the Park Police will be called.
- If no parent or caregiver can be found, and the child can provide no information as to their identity or whereabouts (a parent's name, phone number, where they are, when they are returning etc.) the Park Police will be summoned.
- If an unattended child of any age is behaving in a manner that is disruptive or interferes with the operation or use of the library, that child's parents or caregiver will be notified, and they will be asked to remove the child from the library immediately. If they cannot be located or refuse to do so, the Park Police will be called.

Children and Young Adults under 18 Left Unattended after the Library Has Closed

No person under 18 years of age should be left unattended on library grounds after the building is closed.

- If children or young adults are left unattended at the library at closing time, parents or caregivers will be contacted and asked to retrieve their charges immediately.
 - Library phones can be made available to children for this purpose if needed. If parents are contacted, but they are delayed and can establish a time that they will pick up their child, the in charge person, at his or her discretion, can wait with the child until such time as the parent or caregiver arrives. If the person in charge feels that the parent's expected pickup time is too long a wait, or the parent does not arrive within 30 minutes of closing time, the Park Police will be called and the child placed in their care.
- If a parent or caregiver cannot be contacted and the child is expecting a ride, the in charge person will wait with the minor child for a period up to 30 minutes after closing time.
- If the child is not picked up within 30 minutes, the Park Police will be contacted.

Adults Requiring Special Care

At their discretion, library staff will apply the protocol outlined for unattended children to adults requiring special care, and left unattended in the library.

Early Closing

1. In the event of an early closing, Library personnel should assist minors in contacting their parents or responsible caregivers. This should be done as soon as the time of the closing is decided.
2. Two Library personnel should stay with minors until they are picked up. If safe, it is expected that minors would be allowed to stay within the Library building. The Morris County Park Police should be contacted as necessary.

Reporting

A written report of any incident or situation arising from the above policies should be given to the Library Director so that further action can be taken as necessary and as indicated in the Morris County Library Code of Conduct.

The report should include names, addresses, phone numbers, description of the incident, and the resolution.

Effective date: 4/16/07